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GLIMPSSES OF NUTRITION SOUTH OF THE  
EQUATOR

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, Dr. Hazel K. Stiebeling, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, November 21, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and 90 stations associated with the Blue Network.

-----ooOoo--

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington. And as you have good reason to be expecting on Tuesday, here's your home economics reporter, Ruth Van Deman.

Ruth, I'll leave it to you to present Dr. Stiebeling to our Farm and Home friends.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

So many of them know her already, I think, it's just a case of identifying the voice with the lady.

KADDERLY:

And the name with the bulletin.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, Hazel Stiebeling....."Diets to Fit the Family Income".....they do click just like that.

KADDERLY:

Was that the way it was in South America, Dr. Stiebeling.....down at the nutrition conference you just attended in Buenos Aires?

STIEBELING:

Well, the four diet plans were mentioned several times.

VAN DEMAN:

Now, now, you're being too modest. Didn't you tell me that before you got to the city from the airport someone said, "Oh, yes, we know you.....You're the one who worked out the four diets at four cost levels."

STIEBELING:

South Americans are very polite, you know.

VAN DEMAN:

There must have been more to it than that.....But, Wallace, I'm afraid I'm not living up to you as an introducer.....

KADDERLY:

The broadcast is young yet.

(over)

VAN DEMAN:

Farm and Home friends, Dr. Hazel Stiebeling, as perhaps you've gathered, is just back from a nutrition conference held at Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the auspices of the League of Nations. The purpose of this conference was to consider ways in which the people in both North and South America can be better fed, better nourished. Dr. Stiebeling, I hope I'm not overstepping the language of an international conference too far.

STIEBELING:

Not at all.....I'd just like to add that Argentina is taking a leading part in this work in South America through its National Institute of Nutrition, directed by Professor Pedro Escudero.

VAN DEMAN:

And didn't you say this nutrition institute has the only Spanish-speaking school of dietetics in the world?

STIEBELING:

So I understand.

KADDERLY:

They train dietitians to work in hospitals in Argentina, is that it?

STIEBELING:

Yes, but they do much more than that. This Argentine Institute of Nutrition studies all kinds of problems connected with food. And it makes what we call dietary surveys.

VAN DEMAN:

To find out what typical families are eating.

STIEBELING:

Exactly. And it analyzes these diets to see how they measure up by nutrition standards. Then it publishes the reports, along with suggestions on how families can change their eating habits to improve their nutrition. They put out recipes and menus for better balanced meals.....

KADDERLY:

What is considered a well-balanced meal in Argentina?

STIEBELING:

I'm sorry I can't answer from personal experience, Mr. Kadderly. I was there such a short time, and I didn't have any chance to go into all kinds of homes.

KADDERLY:

And hotel meals.....of course they're pretty much the same the world over.

STIEBELING:

Yes, one can't judge much about national food habits by hotel meals..

But in all the discussions, and in the meals I saw being served to the children in the nursery school run by the Nutrition Institute, I noticed this: The emphasis was being laid on the protective foods.

KADDERLY:

Milk, and fruits, and vegetables, that is.....

STIEBELING:

And eggs, and whole grain cereals.

The day we dropped in to see the nursery school.....and we did just drop in, nothing had been planned ahead.....330 youngsters, all the way from 2 to 5 years old were just sitting down to their lunch.

VAN DEMAN:

Youngsters from underprivileged families, didn't you say they are?

STIEBELING:

Yes, it's the same idea as our free school lunch projects. Only these children get practically all their food at the nursery school. And the student dietitians from the National Institute get practice in calculating the food for each child, according to his height and weight. They go right down the line to the last calorie, and gram of protein, and unit of vitamin A, B, C.....and so on

And I never saw such heaped-up plates as those youngsters had.

KADDERLY:

What was on the bill of fare that day?

STIEBELING:

Meat pie with potatoes and gravy (something like our shepherd's pie)..... and a glass of milk.....Then came, as a separate course, spinach noodles with grated cheese on top.

KADDERLY:

Mmmmm.....that sounds like an Italian dish rather than something native to Argentina.

STIEBELING:

You know Buenos Aires is a very cosmopolitan place. It's a mixture of many nationalities.....And as dessert, after the spinach noodles, came apple sauce with whipped cream, and a cookie.

VAN DEMAN:

Any youngster in North America would like that meal.

KADDERLY:

And an oldster as well as a youngster, speaking for myself.....But I take it, Dr. Stiebeling, from what you say, that the emphasis in this nutrition work everywhere is on the children.



STIEBELING:

Yes, very decidedly. The delegates from every Latin American country represented spoke of the needs of children.

If I had time, though, I could tell you about some of the work for adults. The delegate from Peru gave a very interesting report on their "Popular restaurants", where good food at low cost is served to working people.

And Chile also has some of these popular restaurants, run by the Chilean government.

KADDERLY:

All this is very, very interesting, Dr. Stiebeling, about the work toward better nutrition, south of the equator. But I hope you won't mind if I ask you one or two personal questions about how you felt as you flew over the Equator.... I understand you did fly all the way to Buenos Aires.

STIEBELING:

I flew from Miami, Florida, on. I went that far by train.

VAN DEMAN:

Six days of flying each way.

STIEBELING:

Yes, nearly 17,000 miles all together, down and back. But we spent our nights on the ground. We landed every day in the late afternoon, and had a good night's sleep in a hotel.

But your question, Mr. Kadderly, about flying over the Equator. I did get a thrill from that, of course. It was a beautiful sunshiny day when we crossed the Equator and we flew the highest there of any place on the whole trip....altitude about 12,000 feet.

KADDERLY:

You didn't feel the hot breath of the jungle then.....the equatorial heat we've heard about?

STIEBELING:

No, we were so chilly we had to put our coats on, and blankets over our knees. And just about that time we were served a delicious hot lunch.

KADDERLY:

That is something.....lunching 12,000 feet up in the air over the equator.

VAN DEMAN:

How about those great South American rivers.....the Amazon, the Orinoco..... the La Plata.....How do they look from the air?

STIEBELING:

Exactly the way I used to think they would when I was studying geography. When you see those rivers from an airplane you know the maps in the geography are right.

KADDERLY:

And the jungle.....is it the way you pictured it?

STIEBELING:

No, never in my wildest dreams did I picture the jungle as a huge cauliflower. But that's what it looked like.....with all the different flowerlets different shades of green, and yellow, and orchid, and white, spread out below me for a radius of 25 miles. It was early spring down there. The jungle was in full bloom.

VAN DEMAN:

And what looked like the sections of the cauliflower were flowering trees, I suppose.

STIEBELING:

Probably whole groups of trees.

And one other thing that was very beautiful were the rainbows shining on the white clouds below. We flew way above the clouds most of the time.....The rainbows were often complete circles, with the shadow of our airplane exactly in the center.

KADDERLY:

You carried the end of the rainbow right along with you.

VAN DEMAN:

Maybe that was a good omen. A rainbow is supposed to be the sign of better things to come. And since you say the emphasis at this conference was on better nutrition for children.....

STIEBELING:

Yes, better nutrition for the children of all the Americas.....

That reminds me of the message President Vargas of Brazil sent to the conference. He wanted us to know, he said, that Brazil is very much interested in the nutrition and the welfare of children. He wants the next generation of Brazilians to be an even finer, stronger, healthier people.

KADDERLY:

Building for the children of tomorrow.....that's certainly something we can all subscribe to.

And may I just add, Dr. Stiebeling, that we've enjoyed very much having you tell us about this All American Nutrition Conference in Buenos Aires.

And thank you, Ruth Van Deman, for bringing Dr. Stiebeling.

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